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Arling et al.

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(54) **SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR A SELF
ADAPTIVE MULTI-USER PROGRAM GUIDE**

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See application file for complete search history.

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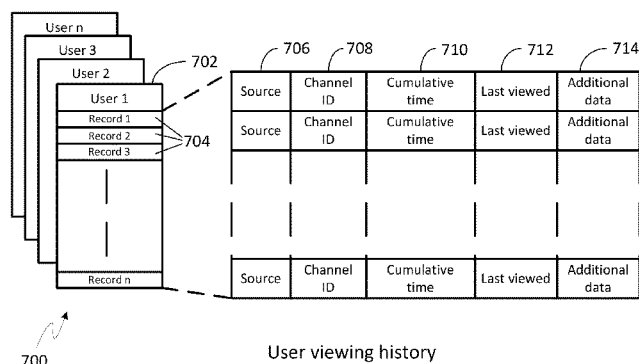
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A media access device such as, for example, a cable or satel-
lite set top box (STB), a digital video recorder (DVR), a
personal computer, and/or a digital media receivers automati-
cally optimizes an order of content choices presented in a
content listing, such as a program guide display, favorite
channel display, and/or a recording listing display based on
the past viewing and/or recording history of a current user.

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC H04N 21/252; H04N 21/2668; H04N

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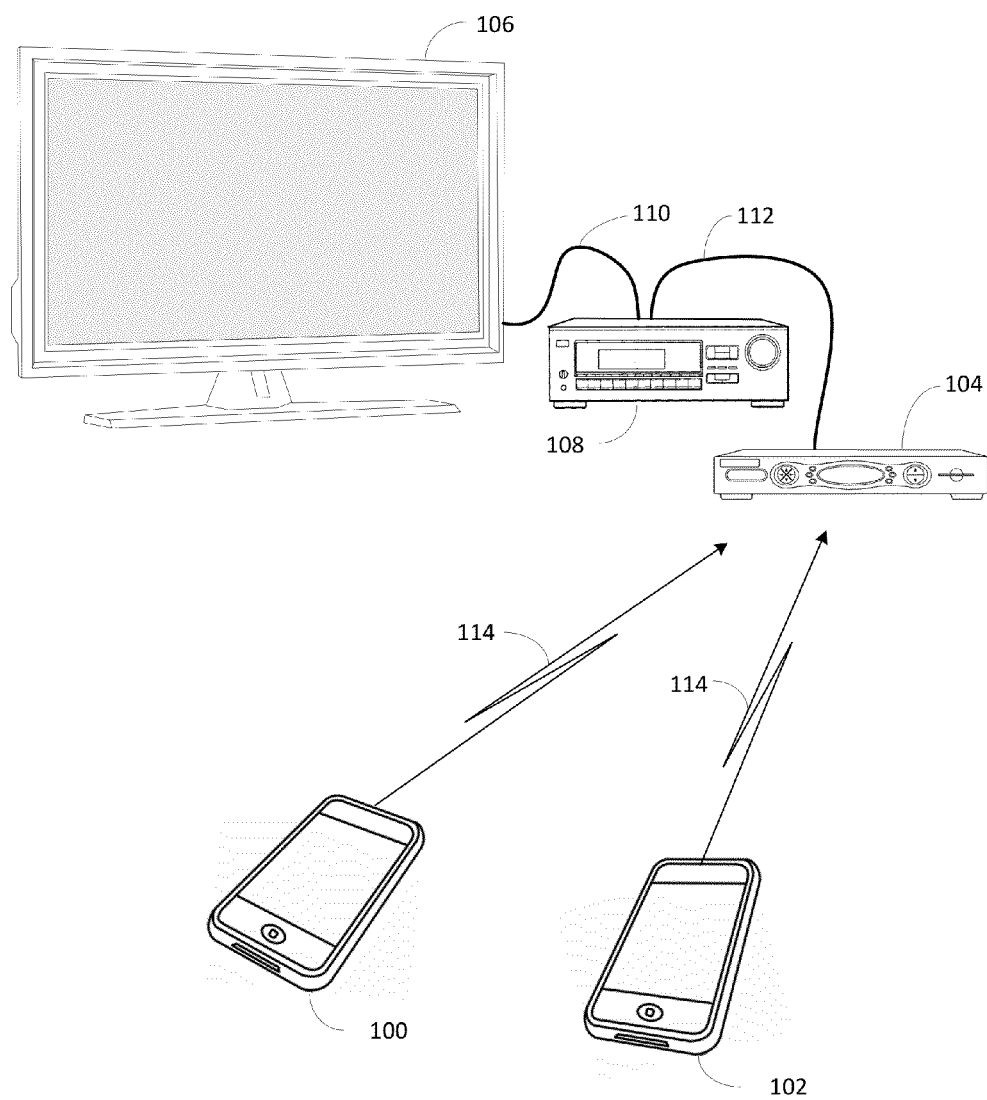


Figure 1

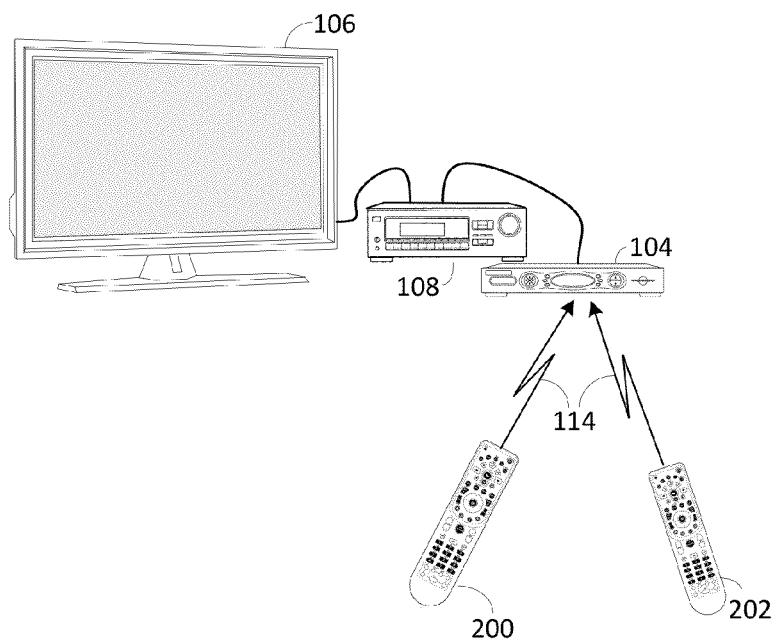


Figure 2

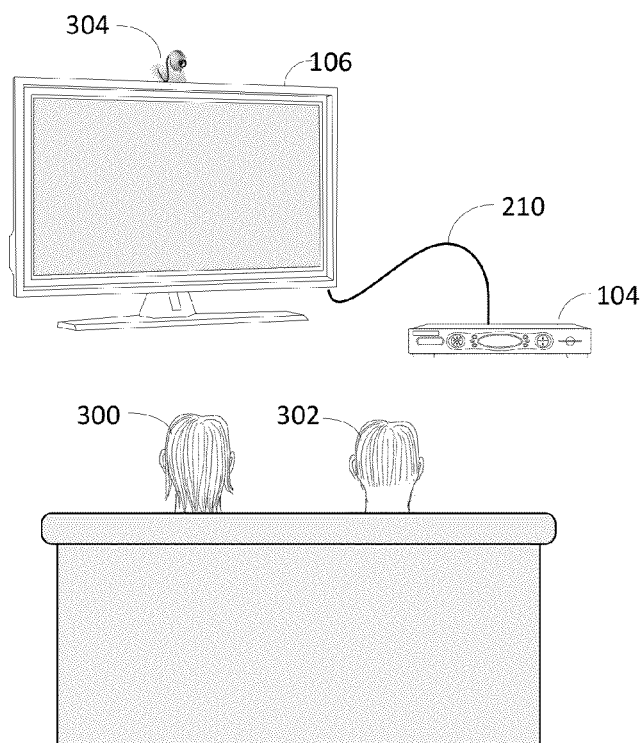


Figure 3

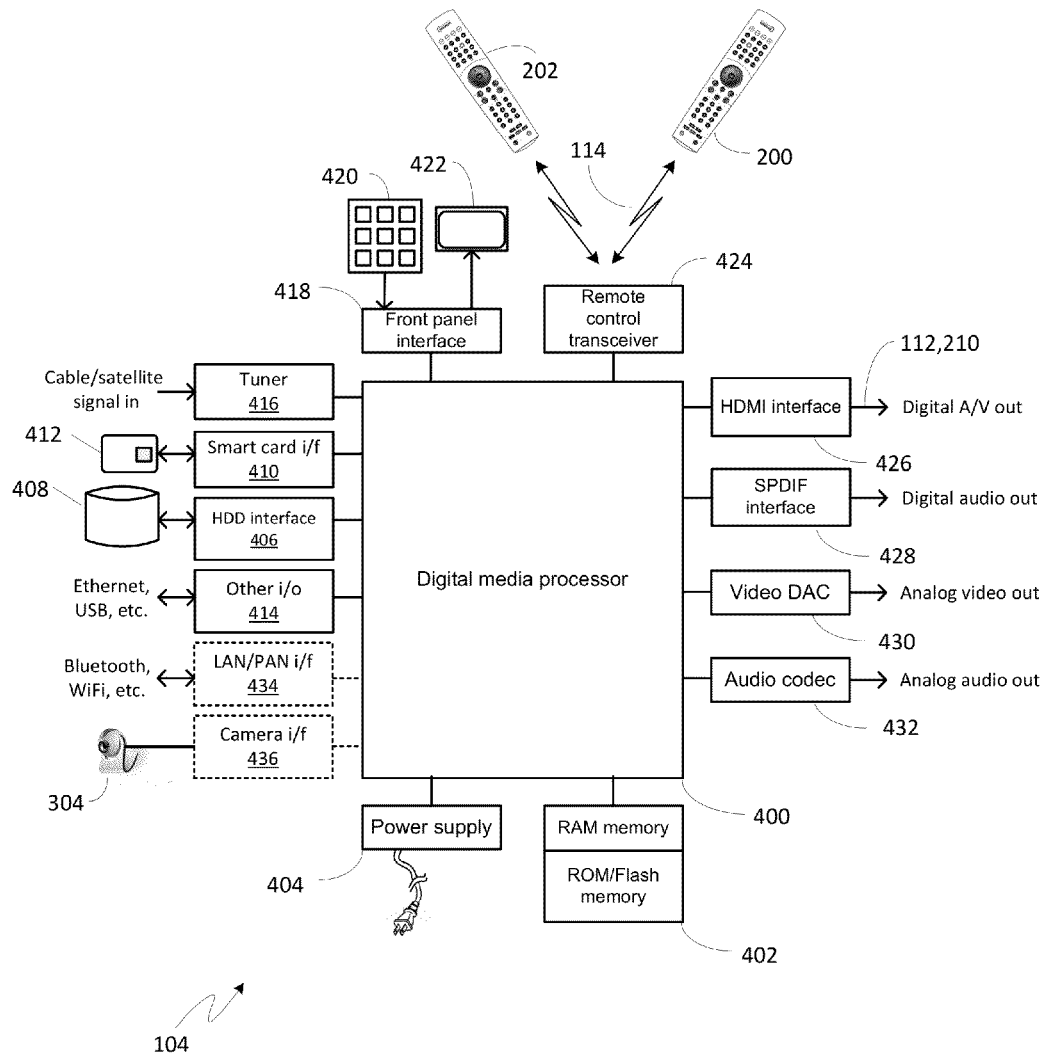


Figure 4

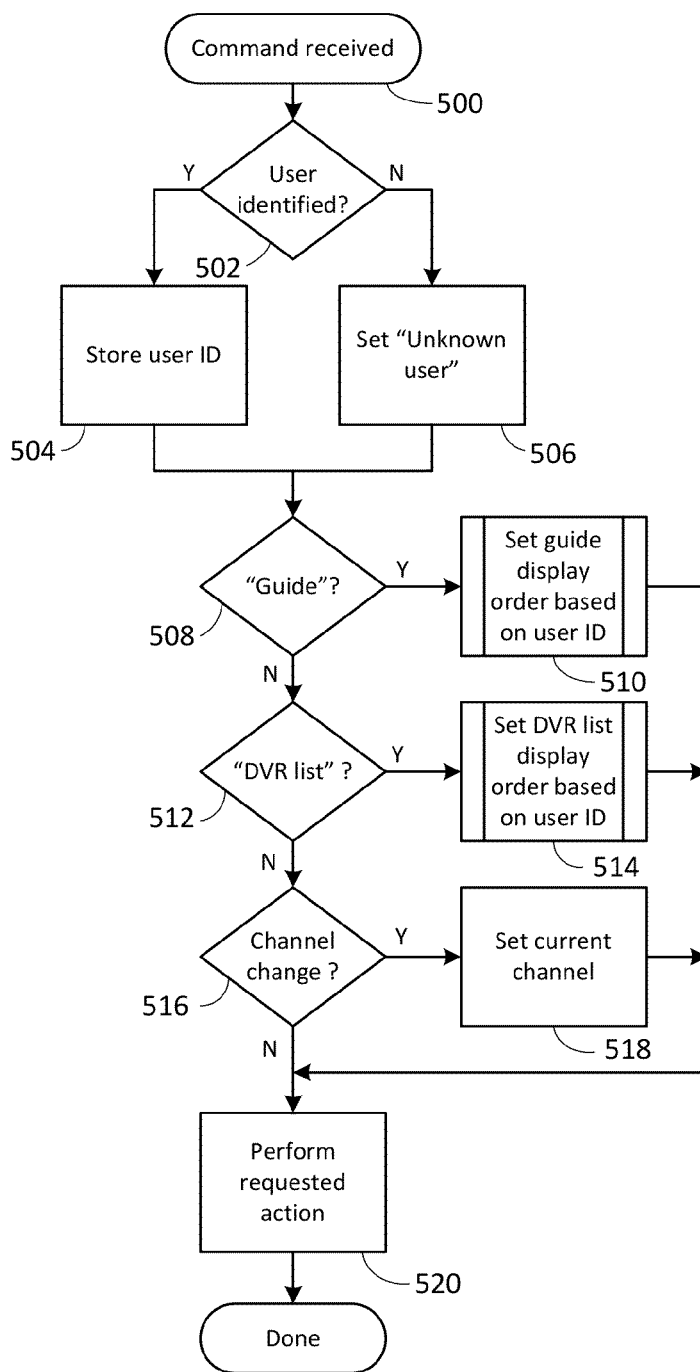


Figure 5

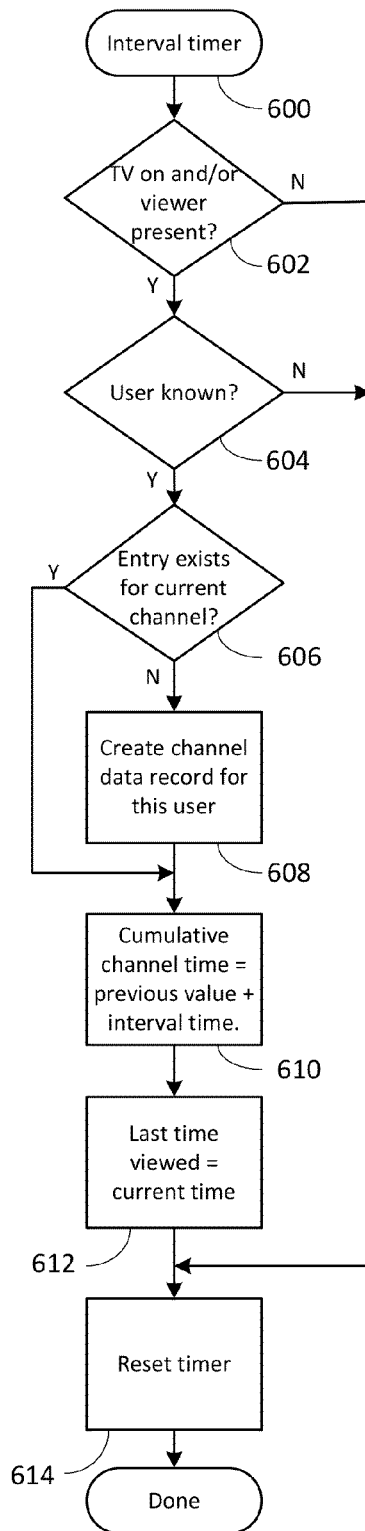


Figure 6

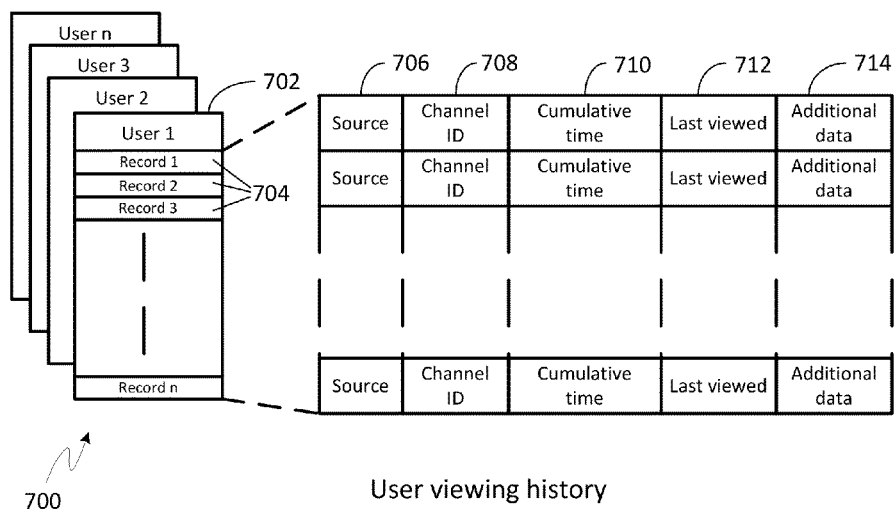


Figure 7

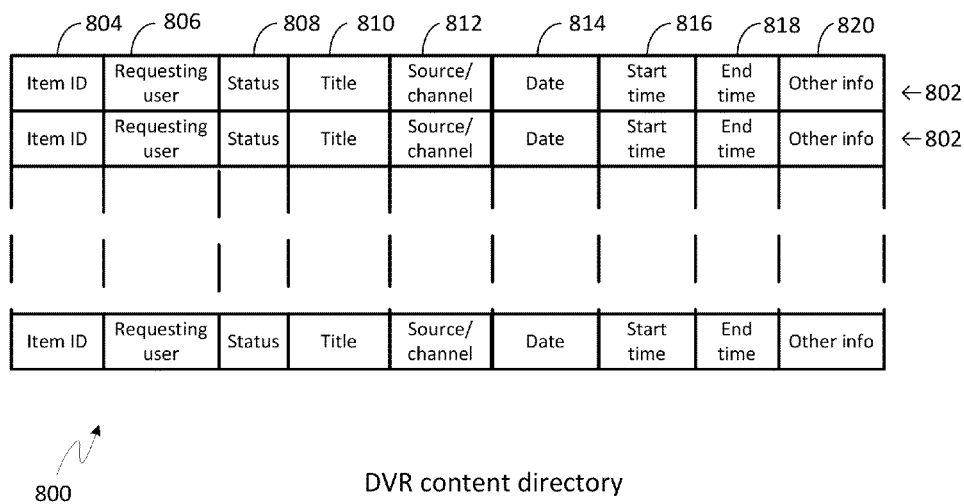


Figure 8

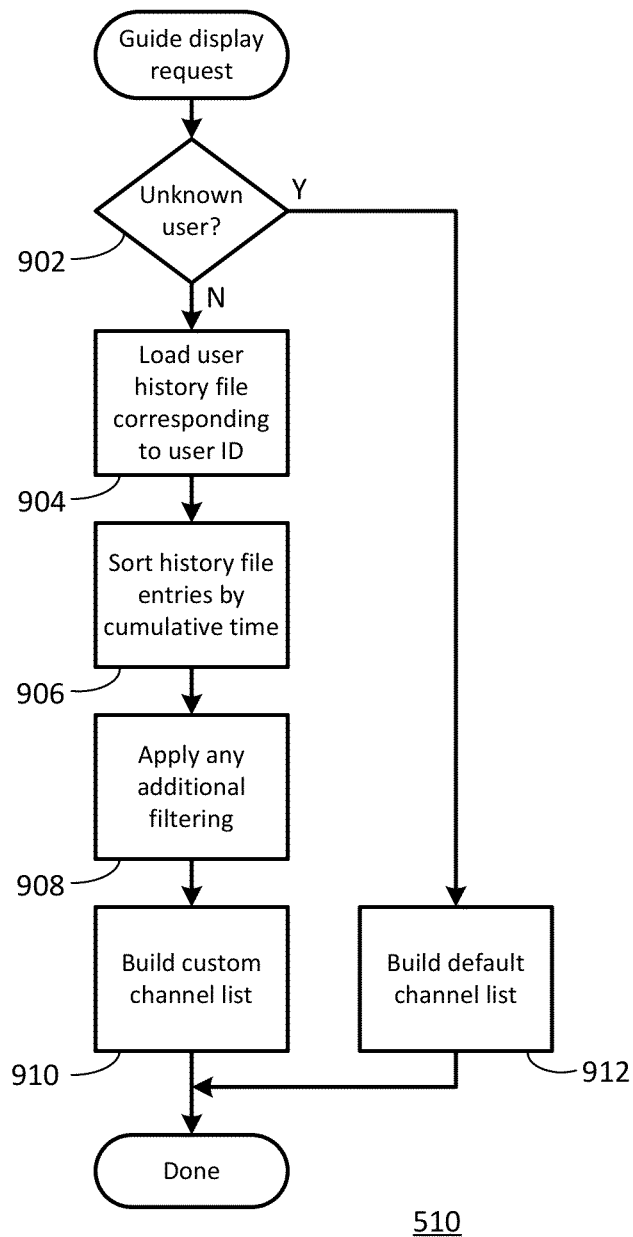


Figure 9

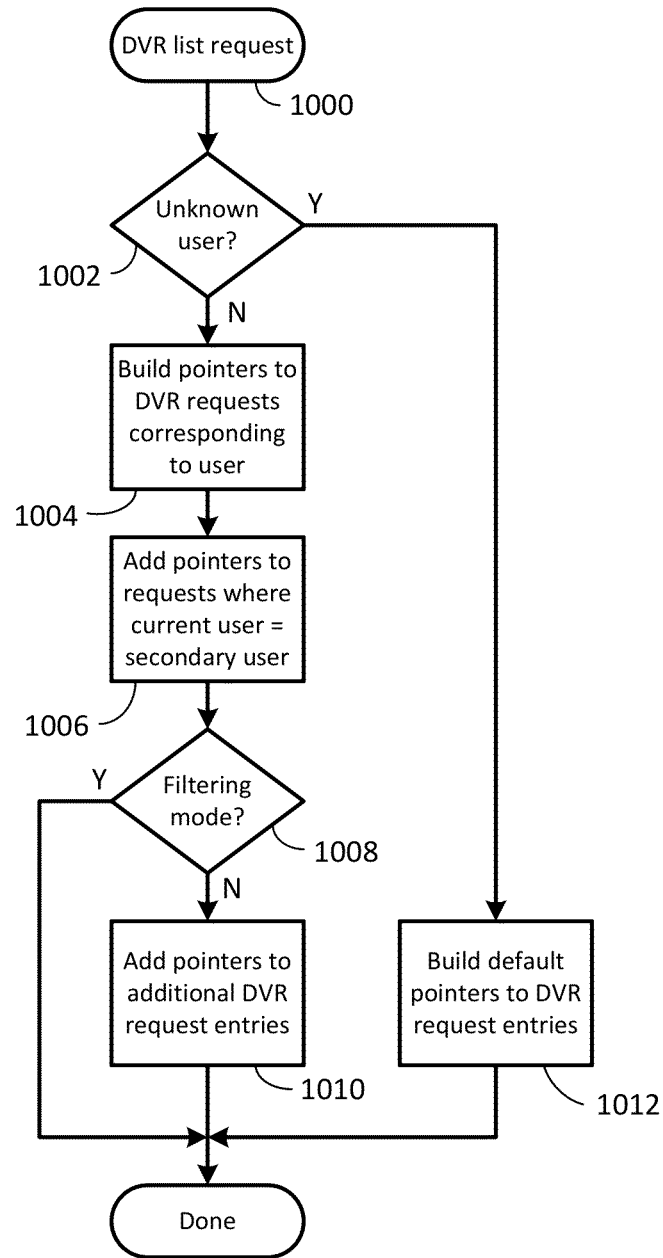
514

Figure 10

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SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR A SELF ADAPTIVE MULTI-USER PROGRAM GUIDE

BACKGROUND

This invention relates generally to improved methods for display of media content listings such as program guides and/or DVR directories. In this regard, the growing volume of media content available to consumers via cable/satellite, Internet, DVR, etc., increasingly necessitates some means of prioritizing a program guide information listing to match the requirements of a particular user. Contemporaneously, multi-room cable/satellite installations, advances in DVR capacity, etc., are resulting in both an increased number of users per household and increasing instances of concurrent media consumption at multiple locations within a household. Additionally, the deployment of “whole house” systems in which a high capacity central DVR is shared amongst multiple TVs may result in an increased number of different users initiating recording requests to a single DVR system. Accordingly, it is desirable to dynamically personalize program guide and/or favorite channel listings to match the particular requirements of a requesting user. While existing methods are available to perform such personalization, some on a per-user basis for multi-user systems, many of these methods are complicated in use and/or require considerable user involvement in configuring and setting up a system for use.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A media access device such as, for example, a cable or satellite set top box (STB), a DVR, a personal computer, digital media receiver, and/or the like, may automatically optimize the order of content choices presented in a content listing, such as a program guide or favorite channel display, based on the past viewing history of a current user. Similarly, the media access device may arrange the display of a content listing related to an integrated or associated DVR device so as to give priority to those entries within the content listing corresponding to recording requests which were originated by a current user.

For the purposes of this invention, a current user may be determined using any convenient method, for example via user-specific remote controls which may be either standalone devices or remote control apps installed on smart phones, tablets, game controllers or similar devices (collectively hereafter “smart devices”); by provision of one or more remote controls adapted to utilize biometric information to identify the current user, for example fingerprint detection, voice recognition, or hand tremor pattern recognition; by provision of a camera together with facial recognition software accessible to the media access device; via explicit user identification by way of a button input, log-in, menu choice, or the like; or any other appropriate method.

When provisioned with user identification means as above, a media access device in accordance with the instant invention may log the actual amount of time spent watching each channel or other content source by each individual user. In this regard, a media access device may use, for example, TV power status obtainable over an HDMI interface, audio return channel monitoring, power line current sensing, etc., to enhance the accuracy of the captured data by ensuring that viewing time is only accumulated while the TV is actually “on.” If available as part of the TV status, for example via an HDMI interface, the media access device may further verify that the currently selected TV input is that to which media access device output is connected.

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In some embodiments, the media access device may also capture and log time/date information in order to further refine program guide or favorite channel display order based on time of day, day of week, or season, e.g., conventional time seasons, sports seasons, or the like. As will be appreciated, in some embodiments program guide displays may not be limited to listing only broadcast content but may include listings from multiple content sources, e.g. broadcast, cable/satellite on demand, DVR recordings, Internet streams, etc.

Additional features which may be available in certain embodiments may include associating a specific user with a smart device’s MAC or other physical ID so that DVR recording requests initiated remotely via that smart device (e.g., over the Internet) may be correctly tagged for subsequent display; adjusting DVR and/or program guide displays to produce a “blended” display order in cases where one user frequently plays back another user’s recording requests; identification of specific groups of users (e.g., via use of facial recognition) for example “family group”, “kids present”, etc., and adjusting the displayed favorites, recordings, and/or channel line-up accordingly; etc.

A better understanding of the objects, advantages, features, properties and relationships of the claimed invention will be obtained from the following detailed description and accompanying drawings which set forth illustrative embodiments and which are indicative of the various ways in which the principles of the claimed invention may be employed.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

For a better understanding of the various aspects of the claimed invention, reference may be had to preferred embodiments shown in the attached drawings in which:

FIG. 1 illustrates an exemplary system in which the methods described hereinafter may be utilized;

FIGS. 2 and 3 illustrate further exemplary systems in which the methods described hereinafter may be utilized;

FIG. 4 illustrates a block diagram of exemplary components of the exemplary STB device of FIG. 1, 2 or 3;

FIG. 5 illustrates by way of flowchart an exemplary series of steps which may be performed by the programming of the STB of FIG. 1, 2, or 3 when processing a user-initiated command;

FIG. 6 illustrates by way of flowchart an exemplary series of steps which may be performed by the programming of the STB of FIG. 1, 2, or 3 in order to capture and log user viewing histories;

FIG. 7 illustrates an exemplary data structure which may be used for recording user viewing history;

FIG. 8 illustrates an exemplary data structure which may be used to manage DVR recording requests;

FIG. 9 illustrates by way of flowchart an exemplary series of steps which may be performed by the programming of the STB of FIG. 1, 2, or 3 when processing user initiated program guide display requests; and

FIG. 10 illustrates by way of flowchart an exemplary series of steps which may be performed by the programming of the STB of FIG. 1, 2, or 3 when processing user initiated requests to list DVR contents.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

With reference to FIG. 1, the methods described herein may be used in conjunction with an exemplary system comprised of a cable or satellite set top box (“STB”) 104, with or without an integrated digital video recorder (“DVR”). As illustrated in FIG. 1, one or more individual smart devices

100,102 such as an iPhone®, iPad®, Android™ device, etc. may be provisioned with a remote control app capable of issuing commands to appliances such as STB **104**, TV **106**, AV receiver **108**, etc. Examples of smart device remote control apps may be found in co-pending U.S. patent application

Communication **114** from a smart device **100,102** to STB **104** may take the form of any convenient infrared (IR), radio frequency (RF), hardwired, point-to-point, or networked protocol, as necessary to cause the respective target appliances to perform the desired operational functions. By way of example, an IR signal may be transmitted to STB directly as described in co-pending U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/043,915 or via an intermediate relay device (not illustrated) such as described in co-pending U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/071,661; an RF communication may comprise any of RF4CE, Bluetooth, WiFi, etc., as appropriate for the particular STB.

In keeping with the teachings set forth herein, STB **104** may be capable of adapting content listings, such as program guide displays, DVR recording listings, etc., in accordance with which one of multiple smart devices is currently being used to control it—for example, which smart device issued the command that initiated the display of a content listing.

STB **104** may be connected to TV **106** using an HDMI interface. The HDMI connection may be via an intermediate switching device such as an AV receiver **108** (HDMI cables **110,112**) or may be direct as illustrated at **210** in FIG. 3.

FIG. 2 illustrates an alternative method for controlling STB **104** in which user identification may be achieved via conventional remote controls **200,202** constructed for example as described in co-pending U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/225,635, e.g., each remote may be adapted to include unique identity information data in every command transmission to STB **104**. Assigning each of these remotes to a specific user may thus enable STB **104** to distinguish between users for the purposes described herein. In alternative embodiments, remote controls **200,202** may utilize biometric user identification techniques, e.g. fingerprint recognition, hand tremor pattern matching, voice recognition, etc.

FIG. 3 illustrates a yet further embodiment in which a camera **304** provides input to facial recognition software in STB **104** for the purpose of distinguishing which of one or more users **300,302** are currently present in the viewing environment.

It will be appreciated that the viewer identification techniques described above may also be used in combination, for example a mixture of conventional remotes such as **200** with a smart device **100** assigned to the same or different users; a combination of a physical remote **200** which determines a “primary” viewer together with camera-based recognition of other viewers present (e.g. family members); etc.

Turning now to FIG. 4, exemplary STB **104** may include, as needed for a particular application, a processor **400** coupled to a memory **402** which may comprise RAM, ROM, and/or Flash memory; a power supply **404**; a hard disk (HDD) interface **406** and associated disk drive **408**, for example to support DVR functionality; a smart card and/or PCMCIA interface **410** where required to accommodate service enablement/decryption cards **412**; other input/output interfaces **414** such as USB, Ethernet, etc.; a front panel interface **418** with associated front panel keypad **420** and display means **422**; a remote control receiver or transceiver **424** for reception of signals from a controlling device such as **200** or **202**; a digital audio/video output interface **426** such as an HDMI port; a digital audio output **432** such as an SPDIF connection; analog video and audio outputs **430,432**; and one or more tuners **416**

for receiving and demodulating a cable or satellite signal. As will be appreciated, in general tuner **416** may be capable of receiving both one or more digital media streams comprising program content and a so called out-of-band data stream comprising, for example, program guide information, software updates, etc.

Optionally, as required for a particular embodiment, STB **104** may include a wireless LAN and/or PAN interface **434** supporting communication over Bluetooth, WiFi and/or WiFi Direct links. As will be appreciated, when so equipped, in certain embodiments STB operational commands may be received via wireless interface **434**, for example from a smart device such as **100**, in place of or in conjunction with command transmissions received via remote control transceiver **424**.

In certain embodiments, Ethernet and/or WiFi interfaces **414, 434** (or any other appropriate method) may be used to network together a group of STBs, for example to allow multiple TVs in a household to access a centralized DVR capability.

Additionally, in some embodiments a camera and/or a camera interface **436** may be provided for use in video telephony applications, for viewer recognition purposes as described herein, etc. It will be appreciated that in alternative embodiments a camera may be interfaced via wireless network interface **434**.

As is known in the art, programming instructions may be stored in a non-transitory readable memory **402** (“STB programming”) which when executed by processor **400** may enable the STB appliance **104** to receive and decode digital media streams and data streams including for example program guide information from tuner **416**; to store received media content and data on HDD **408** or in memory **402**; to output received (from tuner **416**) or retrieved (from HDD **408**) media content via one or more of the output ports **426, 428**; to monitor other I/O ports **414** for activity; to receive, decode, and act upon user commands received from a controlling device **200** or input via front panel **420**; to display content listings, such as one or more of program guide information, listings of stored content, listings of favorite channels, etc.; to display setup and configuration menus at user request and act upon any resulting user input; etc. As will be described hereafter, STB **104** may also include STB programming for monitoring the viewing habits and DVR recording requests of multiple users and utilizing the information gathered to prioritize, filter, and/or otherwise arrange program guide and/or DVR content displays.

Connection of HDMI interface **426** of STB **104** to an appliance such as TV **106** as illustrated in FIGS. 1, 2 and 3 may enable exchange of digital information between these appliances in accordance with, for example, the Extended Display Identification Data (EDID), Consumer Electronics Control (CEC), and/or High-bandwidth Digital Content Protection (HDCP) standards. By way of explanation, EDID defines data which may be provided by a digital display appliance such as TV **106** to a video source such as STB **104** to characterize the capabilities and configuration of the display device; CEC defines methods by which appliances may exchange command and control information over an HDMI link; and HDCP provides a method for appliances to authenticate one another and exchange encryption keys in order to effect secure transmission of digital AV media content. Since all of these standards are readily available from their respective standards-setting bodies, for the sake of brevity the full features and functionality thereof will not be presented herein in detail. For the purposes of the instant invention in particular, such a connection may enable the STB programming of

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STB **104** to determine the “power on” or “power off” state of TV **106**, and in some instances, whether the specific HDMI input of TV **106** to which STB **104** is connected is in fact currently selected as the input media stream being rendered on the screen of TV **106**.

FIG. **5** illustrates in flowchart form a series of actions which may be performed by the STB programming of an exemplary STB **104** upon executing a command. Note that in this context “executing a command” constitutes an action to be performed by the STB, e.g., an action may comprise a response to one or more commands received as a result of button presses on an associated remote control or may comprise an internally generated action. Without limitation and by way of example only an action may be causing a display of a content listing, such as a program guide listing, in response to a single button press of a “Guide” key on the associated remote control or causing the STB to tune to channel **206** in response to a sequence of button presses of a “2”, “0”, and “6” key on the associated remote control, tuning to a particular channel in response to a user’s selection of an item from a program guide display, and the like.

Upon receipt of a command at step **500** (whether received from an external source or generated internally by the STB), at step **502** the STB programming may first determine if the current user has been identified or is identifiable. User identification may be performed using any convenient technique or combination of techniques as appropriate for a particular embodiment, for example: provision of user-specific remote controls (i.e., each user has their own remote adapted to transmit a unique identity as a portion of its signal) as described in co-pending U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/225,635; use of individual smart devices equipped with a remote control app, for example as described in co-pending U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/329,940, whereby a unique smart device ID (serial number, MAC address, etc.) may be used to identify individual users; provision of one or more remote controls adapted to utilize biometric information to identify a current user, for example fingerprint detection or voice recognition as described in U.S. Pat. No. 6,256,109, or hand tremor signature recognition for example as described in U.S. Pat. No. 7,236,156; provision of a camera together with facial recognition software installed as part of the STB programming of STB **104** or on an associated device, for example as described in U.S. Pat. No. 5,771,307 or U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/663,106; explicit user identification of themselves via a button input, menu choice, provision of log-in information, or the like when initiating a viewing session; or any other available method.

If the current user is identifiable, at step **504** the user ID is stored for use in subsequent steps. If not (for example if the command was received from a generic aftermarket universal remote without user identification capability) at step **506** an “unknown user” status may be set. Depending upon the embodiment, the actions of an unknown user may be tracked to provide default actions in the steps that follow, or may be ignored for tracking purposes.

If at step **508** it is determined that the received command is a request to initiate a program guide display, at step **510** the information that is presented in the content listing, e.g., the channels and/or other available content items, may be prioritized as described hereafter in conjunction with FIG. **9** considering the current user’s viewing history, gathered as described hereafter in conjunction with FIGS. **6** through **8**. Similarly, if at step **512** it is determined that the request is to initiate display of previously recorded DVR content, at step **514** DVR entries which correspond to recording requests which were initiated by the current user may be given priority in the resulting

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content listings display. As will be appreciated, in some embodiments DVR content may also be incorporated into the display of program guide listings, either automatically or by user request. In some embodiments, the DVR content may be placed at the top of a content listing over program guide information when the system is operating in a DVR control mode, e.g., the remote control is in a DVR control mode, and may be placed at the bottom of a content listing following program guide information when the system is operating in a TV, Satellite, Cable, or the like mode, e.g., the remote control is a TV, Sat, Cable, or the like mode. Additionally, a DVR content listing may be filtered, e.g., comprise only recordings attributable to the current user and/or comprise only recordings suitable for the current user (e.g., considering content ratings or the like); and/or may be prioritized, e.g., encompass all recorded material, but with recordings attributable to or frequently viewed by the current user appearing first in the displayed listing or being otherwise made more visually prominent. Depending on the particular embodiment the style of DVR listing presentation, filtered and/or prioritized, may be predetermined by design or may be user configurable, either globally for all users or on a per-user basis.

If at step **516** it is determined that the received command is a request to change to a new channel or to a different media stream, the identity of the new channel or media stream may be stored at step **518** for reference during the viewing history accumulation process as will be described hereafter in conjunction with FIG. **6**. Thereafter, at step **520** the requested action may be performed by the STB programming and command execution is complete.

FIG. **6** illustrates in flowchart form a series of actions which may be performed by the STB programming of exemplary STB **104** to accumulate user viewing history data, stored for example as illustrated in FIG. **7**. Referring first to FIG. **7**, the STB programming may maintain a set of viewing history data files **700** corresponding to each separately identifiable user of the system. In certain embodiments, an additional data file for an “unknown,” or default, user may also be maintained. It will be appreciated that in suitably equipped systems, for example where facial recognition is available, a “user” in this context may also comprise a group of individuals, for example “dad” may be one user, and “dad and kids” may be a different user. Detection of viewing groups may also be possible in systems where a wireless network protocol such as Bluetooth or WiFi is used in conjunction with user’s smart devices to provide STB control: in those instances the contemporaneous presence of multiple smart devices on a local network may be used to derive the identity of a user group.

As illustrated, each individual user history file **702** may comprise a series of records, each record **704** comprising a series of fields, for example:

Content source identity **706**. By way of example possible content sources may include cable or satellite channels accessible via tuner **416**, Internet content accessible via Ethernet **414** or WiFi **434** interfaces, previously recorded DVR material accessible from HDD **406**, etc.

Channel ID **708**. By way of example, possible channel IDs may comprise a cable system channel number, a URL, a DVR directory entry, etc. as appropriate for the content source **706** associated with that record.

Cumulative viewing time **710** for this user, which may be accumulated as described hereafter.

Last viewed time **712**, which may comprise the absolute time and date of the last viewing of this particular content source and channel by this particular user, maintained in some

embodiments to allow for removal of and/or modification of stale entries by the STB programming.

In some embodiments, additional information **714** regarding viewing habits may be captured and used to further refine selection or prioritization of items for content listing display. By way of example and without limitation, field **714** may contain several subfields corresponding to time of day, day of week, and/or month of year; which may be used to accumulate data for use in further optimizing program guide displays based on daily, weekly, or seasonal factors.

In order to track and capture user viewing history, the STB programming of STB **104** may utilize a timer function to periodically inspect and capture the state of the system. This timer period may be any convenient value suitable for providing an appropriate level of granularity to the captured data while not imposing an overly large processing burden on the STB. In one exemplary embodiment, the timer period may be of the order of several minutes. It will also be appreciated that in some embodiments the timer interval may be variable: for example, the timer interval may be reduced (or lengthened) for several cycles immediately following execution of a channel change command in order to better detect and accurately capture (or disregard) channel surfing activity in which a user may only dwell on a particular content stream for a short period of time.

Returning now to FIG. 6, upon timer expiry **600**, at step **602** the STB programming may first determine if TV **106** is in fact powered on and, when determinable, rendering STB-supplied content. Such a determination may be made using any convenient method, for example TV status as reported over HDMI interface **426**; TV power monitoring by the STB itself or by an external device such as described for example in U.S. Pat. No. 6,870,463; inspection of simulated state of TV **106** maintained as described for example in U.S. Pat. No. 7,126,468 or 6,784,805; etc. Additionally, in embodiments where viewer presence detection is available, for example via a camera interface **436** on STB **104**; by detection of the presence of a user's smart device on a local network; via passive infrared detection; etc., the user presence status may also be ascertained at this step. If the TV is not on or no viewer is present, no further action is required, the timer is reset at step **614**, and processing is concluded.

If TV **106** is powered on and viewer(s) are present (if presence is utilized), at step **604** the STB programming may next determine if the current user is known to the system (i.e., a valid user ID was stored at step **504** of FIG. 5 when executing the last user command received by STB **104**). If not, processing concludes as before. If so, at step **606** the STB programming may next determine if a record **704** corresponding to the current channel (i.e., the source and channel ID value last stored at step **518** of FIG. 5 when executing a channel or media stream change command) already exists in the individual viewing history file **702** of the current user. If not, at step **608** a new record may be created. Thereafter, at step **610** the cumulative viewing time **710** for that record may be incremented, for example by adding the elapsed timer value to any current value in field **710** and storing that new value, and the last viewed field **712** may be updated by storing the current date/time into field **712**. In those embodiments where they exist, additional data field(s) **714** may be updated as well. Thereafter, at step **614** the timer is reset, and processing is concluded.

As will be appreciated, in order to ensure optimal performance, the STB programming of STB **104** may periodically engage in data maintenance or "housekeeping" activity with respect to the user viewing history files. Scheduling of such activity may be on a calendar basis, e.g., weekly or monthly;

may be on an elapsed time basis, e.g., after a predetermined number of active viewing hours have been logged; may be by explicit user request; may be based on a combination thereof; or may be on any other basis appropriate for a particular embodiment. Maintenance activity may comprise for example removal of stale records **704**, e.g., those with a "last viewed" date older than a certain date, which date may be a predetermined value or may be dynamically determined based on system resources such as available memory, those that have a date, are related to content genre, etc. that are no longer in season, and the like. Alternatively, in some embodiments stale records may not be removed immediately, but may rather be subjected to a gradual downgrading process, for example by a step-wise reduction in accumulated time value **710**, which, as will become apparent, may cause the corresponding channel ID to appear increasingly lower in the program guide listing display.

FIG. 8 illustrates an exemplary DVR content directory **800** which may be used in conjunction with the methods described herein. Within this DVR content directory, each entry **802** corresponds to a single recorded or to-be-recorded item and comprises a series of fields as follows:

Item ID field **804** may comprise a unique item identifier, which may be used for example to populate a channel ID field **708** in a user viewing history record **704** when source device field **706** is "DVR".

Requesting user field **806** may be the user ID of the user requesting the recording, for example the user ID captured at step **504** of FIG. 5 during input of the recording request command.

Status field **808** may reflect the current status of this request within the DVR system, for example "Successfully recorded", "Yet to be recorded", "Recording in progress", "Recording error", etc. In some embodiments, the status field **808** may also reflect if a user has watched a recorded program.

Title field **810** may contain the title of the content, which, for example, may be derived from the program guide information stored in STB memory at the time the recording request was initiated.

Source/channel field **812** may contain the content source and channel ID from which the desired content was or is to be recorded.

Date field **814**, start time field **816**, and end time field **818** may define the recording instance, which as before may be derived from the program guide information stored in STB memory at the time the recording request was initiated. It will be appreciated that the contents of date field **814** may also include an indication of that the request is for "series recording," i.e., all episodes of a recurring program are to be recorded. By way of example, one method for implementing such a feature may comprise automatically inserting a further entry **802** into the DVR content directory **800** each time an existing series recording request is completed (i.e., when updating status field **808** to "Successfully recorded").

Other information field **820** may contain, as appropriate for a particular embodiment, additional information regarding the content (e.g., release date, cast members, etc.) and/or DVR housekeeping information (e.g., HDD directory pointers, retention period settings, etc.). Additionally, in certain embodiments other information may include subfield(s) for storing the user IDs of secondary users, e.g., users who, although not the originators of the recording request, may have viewed or otherwise expressed interest in this item of content. As will be appreciated, in the case of series recording requests, such additional user information may also be propagated forward as future recording request entries are generated.

For filtering purposes, it is also contemplated that the system may capture genre and/or ratings information for a recorded program. In this manner, for example, the genre and/or ratings information can be utilized to filter information within a displayed content listing based upon a viewing permission level for that user thus providing a form of parental control.

With reference to FIG. 9, processing of a user a request for display of a program guide listing by the STB programming of STB 104, for example as may occur at step 510 of FIG. 5, may comprise the following steps:

At step 902, STB programming may first determine if the current user is unknown. If so, at step 912 the default action established for that condition may be taken. This may comprise, for example, simply arranging the information in a displayed content listing, e.g., a program guide, in ascending or descending channel number sequence; prioritizing the information if a displayed content listing as described hereafter using a default viewing history that has been maintained for “unknown user,” using a content provider supplied preferred order; or any other arrangement as appropriate for a particular embodiment.

If the current user is known, at step 904 the STB programming may retrieve the user history file 702 corresponding to the current user. At step 906, the individual entries 704 of the retrieved history file may be arranged in descending order of accumulated viewing time 710. At step 908 any additional filtering factors may be applied to further adjust the order of the sorted entries, for example without limitation, a factor derived from the “last viewed” information field 712 may be applied to promote more recently viewed items over older entries; time/date information from additional data 714 (where available) may be compared to the current time/date in order to adjust for daily, weekly or seasonal factors; etc.

Thereafter, at step 910 the source and channel ID fields 706, 708 from the newly-ordered viewing history data may be used to prioritize an order in which the information within a content listing is displayed, i.e., to thereby provide a user-specific order to the listing of the content of the program guide that is caused to be displayed, for example, during the execution of step 520 of FIG. 5.

With reference to FIG. 10, processing of a user request for display of a listing of available DVR content by the STB programming of STB 104, for example as may occur at step 514 of FIG. 5, may comprise the following steps:

At step 1002, STB programming may first determine if the current user is unknown. If so, at step 1012 the default action for that condition may be taken, for example preparing to list all DVR content in chronological or alphabetical order; preparing to list only content corresponding to DVR content directory entries 802 in which the requesting user field 806 is set to “unknown;” or any other arrangement as appropriate for a particular embodiment.

If the current user is known, at step 1004 the STB programming may initially build a set of pointers to a subset of DVR content directory entries corresponding to only those items for which the requesting user field 806 matches the current user and in which status field 808 contains the status “Successfully recorded” or “Recording in progress.” Thereafter, at step 1006 the STB programming may add to the set further pointers to DVR content directory entries corresponding to those items for which the current user ID appears as a secondary user in the other information field 820 and status field 808 contains the status “Successfully recorded” or “Recording in progress.” Next, at step 1008, the STB programming may determine if the DVR content display feature is operating in filtering or prioritizing mode. As described previously,

in filtering mode only the DVR content attributable to the current user (and/or accessible by the current user) may be displayed. Accordingly, if the STB programming is operating in filtering mode, generation of DVR content directory pointers for use by a display routine, for example during the execution of step 520 of FIG. 5, is complete and processing ends.

If operating in prioritizing mode, at step 1010 the STB programming may next append additional DVR content directory pointers to the set created during steps 1004 and 1006 above, e.g., to display such additional DVR content at the end of the displayed DVR content directory, in a supplemental directory, etc. Such additional pointers may comprise the balance of the DVR content directory entries in chronological or alphabetical order, or any other ordering as appropriate for a particular embodiment. Thereafter, generation of an ordered list of DVR content pointers is complete and ready for use by a display routine, for example during the execution of step 520 of FIG. 5.

As also described above, a combination of prioritizing and filter may be employed whereupon a known user would be provided with a content listing in which the information in the content listing is prioritized considering recording requests made by that user, that user’s content watching history, etc. while removing from the displaying listing of content those recorded programs that the user is not authorized to access, e.g., the rating is not within a ratings limit set for that user.

While various concepts have been described in detail, it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that various modifications and alternatives to those concepts could be developed in light of the overall teachings of the disclosure. For example, while the illustrative embodiment presented above is implemented in an STB device, it will be appreciated that the inventive methods may be equally applied to any system in which available media content is to be listed or displayed to a user, including without limitation TV devices, personal computers, media servers, cloud-based media aggregation services, digital media receivers, etc. Furthermore, it will be appreciated that while the exemplary data structures of FIGS. 7 and 8 are presented in tabular form for ease of reference herein, in practice these may be implemented in various forms using any convenient data representation, for example a structured database, XML file, cloud-based service, etc., as appropriate for a particular embodiment.

Additionally, it will be appreciate that the methods of the instant invention may be combined with other program guide display techniques—for example, a user may define an explicit list of favorite channels to which the techniques described herein are to applied to the exclusion of other content, or conversely may define a list of preferred channels which are exempt for the prioritization process and will always be displayed; and/or the prioritization process may be applied to multiple genres of content, e.g., separate viewing histories may be maintained for individual categories such as sports, news, drama, comedy, etc.

Further, while described in the context of functional modules and illustrated using block diagram format, it is to be understood that, unless otherwise stated to the contrary, one or more of the described functions and/or features may be integrated in a single physical device and/or a software module, or one or more functions and/or features may be implemented in separate physical devices or software modules. It will also be appreciated that a detailed discussion of the actual implementation of each module is not necessary for an enabling understanding of the invention. Rather, the actual implementation of such modules would be well within the routine skill of an engineer, given the disclosure herein of the

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attributes, functionality, and inter-relationship of the various functional modules in the system. Therefore, a person skilled in the art, applying ordinary skill, will be able to practice the invention set forth in the claims without undue experimentation. It will be additionally appreciated that the particular concepts disclosed are meant to be illustrative only and not limiting as to the scope of the invention which is to be given the full breadth of the appended claims and any equivalents thereof.

All patents, patent applications, and other publications cited within this document are hereby incorporated by reference in their entirety.

What is claimed is:

1. A non-transitory, computer readable media having stored thereon instructions which, when executed by a processing device, perform steps comprising:

capturing information indicative of a one of a plurality of program channels being accessed and information indicative of one or more of a plurality of users accessing the one of the plurality of program channels;

using the captured information indicative of the one of the plurality of program channels being accessed and indicative of the one or more of the plurality of users accessing the one of the plurality of program channels to update a program channel access history for the one or more of the plurality of users, wherein using the captured information indicative of the one of the plurality of program channels being accessed and indicative of the one or more of the plurality of users accessing the one of the plurality of program channels to update the program channel access history for the one or more of the plurality of users comprises increasing a value indicative of a cumulative access time of each of the plurality of channels of which access was captured as maintained within the program channel access history for the one or more of the plurality of users; and

in response to a request received from the one or more of the plurality of users to display a program channel guide, providing an order to listings within the program channel guide as a function of the cumulative access times of each of the plurality of program channels of which access was captured as maintained within the program channel access history for the one or more of the plurality of users;

wherein the instructions capture information indicative of a one of a plurality of program channels being accessed and information indicative of one or more of a plurality of users accessing the one of the plurality of program channels upon each expiration of a measured time interval;

wherein the instructions increase the value indicative of a cumulative access time of each of the plurality of channels of which access was captured within the program channel access history for the one or more of the plurality of users upon each expiration of the measured time interval;

wherein a first measured time interval is started in response to an instruction to change a program channel being accessed; and

wherein the measured time interval is caused to be changed from a first value used in connection with the first measured time interval to a second value in response to a predetermined number of expirations of the measured time interval having the first value.

2. A non-transitory, computer readable media having stored thereon instructions which, when executed by a processing device, perform steps comprising:

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capturing information indicative of a one of a plurality of program channels being accessed and information indicative of one or more of a plurality of users accessing the one of the plurality of program channels;

using the captured information indicative of the one of the plurality of program channels being accessed and indicative of the one or more of the plurality of users accessing the one of the plurality of program channels to update a program channel access history for the one or more of the plurality of users, wherein using the captured information indicative of the one of the plurality of program channels being accessed and indicative of the one or more of the plurality of users accessing the one of the plurality of program channels to update the program channel access history for the one or more of the plurality of users comprises increasing a value indicative of a cumulative access time of each of the plurality of channels of which access was captured as maintained within the program channel access history for the one or more of the plurality of users; and

in response to a request received from the one or more of the plurality of users to display a program channel guide, providing an order to listings within the program channel guide as a function of the cumulative access times of each of the plurality of program channels of which access was captured as maintained within the program channel access history for the one or more of the plurality of users

wherein using the captured information indicative of the one of the plurality of program channels being accessed and the one or more of the plurality of users accessing the one of the plurality of program channels to update the program channel access history for the one or more of the plurality of users further comprises storing data indicative of at least one of an access date, day, and time in association with each of the plurality of channels of which access was captured as maintained within the program channel access history for the one or more of the plurality of users; and

wherein the instructions use current time data as compared to data indicative of the at least one of the access date, day, and time stored in association with each of the plurality of channels of which access was captured within the program channel access history for the one or more of the plurality of users to automatically decrease the value indicative of a cumulative access times of each of the plurality of channels of which access was captured as maintained within the program channel access history for the one or more of the plurality of users.

3. The non-transitory, computer readable media as recited in claim 2, wherein, in response to the request received from the one or more of the plurality of users to display a program channel guide, the instructions provide an order to listings within the program channel guide as a further function of at least one of the access date, day, and time stored in association with each of the plurality of channels of which access was captured as maintained within the program channel access history for the one or more of the plurality of users.

4. The non-transitory, computer readable media as recited in claim 1, wherein the instructions periodically decrease the value indicative of a cumulative access times of each of the plurality of channels of which access was captured as maintained within the program channel access history for the one or more of the plurality of users.

5. The non-transitory, computer readable media as recited in claim 1, wherein the information indicative of the one or more of the plurality of user is captured via use of a camera.

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6. The non-transitory, computer readable media as recited in claim 1, wherein the information indicative of the one or more of the plurality of users is captured via use of a signal received from a controlling device.

7. The non-transitory, computer readable media as recited in claim 1, wherein the information indicative of the one or more of the plurality of user is captured via use of user provided log-in information.

8. The non-transitory, computer readable media as recited in claim 1, wherein the instructions forego capturing, upon expiration of a measured time interval, information indicative of a one of a plurality of program channels being accessed and information indicative of one or more of a plurality of users accessing the one of the plurality of program channels in response to a detected absence of power being provided to at least one of a device responsible for program channel tuning and a device responsible for program channel display.

9. The non-transitory, computer readable media as recited in claim 1, wherein the instructions forego capturing information indicative of a one of a plurality of program channels being accessed and information indicative of one or more of a plurality of users accessing the one of the plurality of program channels in response to a detected absence of a user within a vicinity of at least one of a device responsible for program channel tuning and a device responsible for program channel display.

10. The non-transitory, computer readable media as recited in claim 2, wherein the instructions forego capturing, upon expiration of the measured time interval, information indicative of a one of a plurality of program channels being accessed and information indicative of one or more of a plurality of users accessing the one of the plurality of program channels in response to a detected absence of a user within a vicinity of at least one of a device responsible for program channel tuning and a device responsible for program channel display.

11. The non-transitory, computer readable media as recited in claim 1, wherein the instructions forego capturing information indicative of a one of a plurality of program channels being accessed and information indicative of one or more of a plurality of users accessing the one of the plurality of pro-

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gram channels in response to a detected absence of a user within a vicinity of at least one of a device responsible for program channel tuning and a device responsible for program channel display.

12. The non-transitory, computer readable media as recited in claim 2, wherein the instructions forego capturing, upon expiration of the measured time interval, information indicative of a one of a plurality of program channels being accessed and information indicative of one or more of a plurality of users accessing the one of the plurality of program channels in response to a detected absence of a user within a vicinity of at least one of a device responsible for program channel tuning and a device responsible for program channel display.

13. The non-transitory, computer readable media as recited in claim 1, wherein the instructions further include with a display of the ordered program channel guide a listing of programs recorded via use of digital video recording device.

14. The non-transitory, computer readable media as recited in claim 2, wherein the instructions periodically decrease the value indicative of a cumulative access times of each of the plurality of channels of which access was captured as maintained within the program channel access history for the one or more of the plurality of users.

15. The non-transitory, computer readable media as recited in claim 2, wherein the information indicative of the one or more of the plurality of user is captured via use of a camera.

16. The non-transitory, computer readable media as recited in claim 2, wherein the information indicative of the one or more of the plurality of users is captured via use of a signal received from a controlling device.

17. The non-transitory, computer readable media as recited in claim 2, wherein the information indicative of the one or more of the plurality of user is captured via use of user provided log-in information.

18. The non-transitory, computer readable media as recited in claim 2, wherein the instructions further include with a display of the ordered program channel guide a listing of programs recorded via use of digital video recording device.

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